



Contact: Karen Francis, *Judicial Liaison Officer*
Administrative Office of the Courts
JUDICIAL BRANCH OF THE NAVAJO NATION
Office: 928-871-7018
Facsimile: 928-871-6761
E-mail: karenfrancis@navajo.org
<http://www.navajocourts.org>

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE: Monday, April 4, 2011

**RETIRED JUDGE BECENTI REMEMBERED FOR ROLE IN STRENGTHENING
NAVAJO JUDICIAL SYSTEM**

CROWNPOINT, N.M. – The Honorable Tom B. Becenti, retired trial court judge of the Navajo Nation, passed away March 28, 2011. Interment is being held at the Santa Fe National Cemetery in Santa Fe, N.M., on Monday, April 4, 2011.

Mr. Becenti was from the Becenti Chapter in the Eastern Navajo Agency. He was born December 21, 1920. He served in the U.S. Army from 1942 to 1945 and was a veteran of World War II.

Mr. Becenti was approved for appointment as a trial court judge by the Navajo Tribal Council on June 17, 1960, through Resolution CJN-36-60. He served at the Crownpoint Judicial District and retired on February 25, 1977. He was also a peacemaker with the Peacemaking Program and continued to assist in presiding over court cases even after retirement.

Family and community members remembered Mr. Becenti during memorial services on Thursday, March 31, 2011, at St. Paul's Catholic Church in Crownpoint, N.M. Family members and colleagues spoke about his childhood and family, military service, rodeo and ranch life, judicial services and community and public service.

Mr. Becenti was remembered as a family man and community leader who loved to rodeo and also served as a chapter official. He was remembered for his work in strengthening the Navajo Nation judicial system and was praised for using Navajo common law in his work as a judge.

Retired District Court Judge Loretta Morris said that Judge Becenti would discipline attorneys who came into court trying to use outside laws. He would tell them this is the Navajo Nation and we have our own laws, Morris said.

"He was a noble leader," she said.

Navajo Nation Council Delegate Leonard Tsosie said that Judge Becenti helped to develop the Navajo Nation. As a trial court judge in Crownpoint, he provided services to To'Hajiilee, Ramah and Alamo before there were courts in those areas, he said.

“Because of his rulings the Navajo sovereignty is the better for it, and it’s safer,” Tsosie said.

Charles Long, speaking on Mr. Becenti’s community and political service, said that he always made sure that the Treaty of 1868 was the basis of Navajo government.

“Every place you go, everywhere you look at within the Eastern Agency, he had something to do with,” Long said.

Becenti is survived by wife Dorothy H. Becenti, son Arnold Becenti of Crownpoint, two daughters Doris Becenti of Washington D.C. and Deloris Becenti of Becenti, six grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren.

###